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## American Indian Culture and Research Journal

### Title

Native People of Southern New England, 1500-1650. By Kathleen J. Bragdon.

### Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/8c2518hv>

### Journal

American Indian Culture and Research Journal , 21(2)

### ISSN

0161-6463

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### Publication Date

1997-03-01

### DOI

10.17953

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Native issues and a good place to start learning about American Indian cultures for the general reader.

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**Native People of Southern New England, 1500-1650.** By Kathleen J. Bragdon. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1996. 301 pages. \$28.95 cloth.

Kathleen J. Bragdon's *Native People of Southern New England, 1500-1650* is a long-awaited, valuable addition to the field of Native American history. Most scholars who have written about southern New England Natives, including Francis Jennings, Alden T. Vaughan, Neal Salisbury, James Axtell, and William S. Simmons, have relied heavily on the writings of sixteenth and seventeenth-century European observers of Native Americans. (See Francis Jennings, *The Invasion of America: Indians, Colonialism, and the Cant of Conquest*; Alden T. Vaughan, *New England Frontier: Puritans and Indians, 1620-1675*, 3rd ed.; Neal Salisbury, *Manitou and Providence: Indians, Puritans, and the Making of New England, 1500-1634*; James Axtell, *The Invasion Within: The Contest of Cultures in Colonial North America*; William S. Simmons, *Spirit of the New England Tribes: Indian History and Folklore, 1620-1984*.) Bragdon, too, draws from these sources, but, to provide "a valuable corrective to the bias" inherent in European documents, she also draws from recent archeological research, as well as her own linguistic research (p. 231). Thus, the book benefits from the strengths of several disciplines.

*Native People of Southern New England* is a strongly revisionist work. Early on, Bragdon makes it clear that (1) she intends to write her history of the "Ninnimissinuok" (a term Bragdon borrows from the Narragansett word for "people" [p. xi] from a Native perspective, not to describe "the impact of our history" on them (p. xiii), and (2) she intends to describe a distinct people, not generic Native Americans. On the first point, Bragdon acknowledges her debt to recent histories of Native Americans, which have "contributed immensely to our understanding" (p. xxiii). At the same time, she complains that the very frameworks of these histories reflect a European, not Native American, perspective, as can be seen in their reliance on economic rationalism to explain Native behavior and their standard linear

narrative, which privileges events that occurred most recently. Hence, the period of Native American contact with Europeans has received far more emphasis in the historical literature than the much longer time preceding contact.

Bragdon offers a different perspective on Native American history, one that gleans from written European accounts but sees Native culture and history as essentially separate from that of Europeans. As she sees it, patterns of Native culture were established through a process of repetition, the "recursiveness" of gestures, rituals, daily practices, settlement patterns, and kinship and gender roles. These patterns formed a structure of beliefs and actions that persisted in its essential form through and beyond contact with Europeans. Bragdon's view of Native American history as independent of European history colors her entire account. She is very careful to point out when each Ninnimissinuok cultural pattern was formed and insists that virtually all emerged before European contact and then persisted with minimal adaptation in the years afterward. This insistence directly counters the views of generations of anthropologists and historians who adopted "romanticized and mordant views of Native cultural disappearance." Bragdon, instead, argues for Native cultural vitality and wholeness (p. xxii). Her attempt is laudable and needed, but like any revisionist approach, it can swing too far in the opposite direction. While most of her conclusions are supported by good archeological, documentary, and other evidence, some traits are drawn under the shelter of her thesis without sufficient support to convincingly refute other scholars' claims that they emerged after or were transformed by contact. And, because the book concludes at 1650, the second half of Bragdon's premise, that Ninnimissinuok cultural traits persisted after contact, is asserted rather than demonstrated (see pp. 246-247). That is, perhaps, substance for a future book.

The second major argument of *Native People of Southern New England* is that the Ninnimissinuok, and in fact all Native Americans, are distinct from other Native groups. One of Bragdon's first attacks on the homogenized view of Native American life is in her opening chapter, on the tripartite settlement pattern. She notes that the vast majority of archeology in New England has focused on only one of the three settlement patterns used by Natives of the region, the "riverine" ecosystem. In this system, found chiefly in the Connecticut River valley, agricultural sedentism (or a "village" model) was practiced, with the cultivation of maize and beans. Few studies have dis-

cussed the other two systems, the estuarine and the uplands systems. Bragdon gives detailed descriptions of each pattern and its ecosystem and includes archeological studies describing how the tripartite pattern can be distinguished in the field. Her discussion makes it clear that the terms *sedentary* and *migratory* are inadequate to describe Native settlement patterns.

Bragdon's critique of traditional ideas of Native American values and practices further displays her commitment to write an accurate, specific history of the Ninnimissinuok. She asserts that scholars often emphasize such notions as consensus, reciprocity, and egalitarianism "to bolster implicitly moralistic contrasts" between Natives and Europeans (p. 45). Scholars of contact history in the 1970s and 1980s followed Francis Jennings' lead in rejecting Eurocentric histories of the past by highlighting positive attributes of Native cultures in direct contrast to European cultures. Bragdon's book modifies this approach. While she agrees that redistribution and other traits generally viewed as positive were indeed part of Ninnimissinuok culture, she shows us another side as well: sachems who redistributed goods could, in that act, both foster egalitarianism and exact tribute to further their own political ends. Individual circumstances determined the treatment of war captives; some were indeed adopted as kin, while others became nameless slaves for life. By showing that Native values and practices were multidimensional, Bragdon creates a more nuanced, whole picture of the Ninnimissinuok.

Bragdon's discussion of reciprocity illustrates how, rather than simply repeating the common understanding of a Native American value, she shows how it worked within a specific culture. Reciprocity, she explains, did exist among the Ninnimissinuok, but it did not reflect disregard for material possessions in contrast to the more acquisitive English. In fact, Bragdon documents that the Ninnimissinuok were eager for material goods, showed "delight in abundance when circumstances afford it and...consume ostentatiously what they have" (p. 132). This "prodigality," which troubled prudent Englishmen such as William Wood, is comprehensible within the Ninnimissinuok worldview. Attuned to the seasonal cycles of plenty and want, the Ninnimissinuok felt free to consume "ostentatiously," trusting that abundance would return with time. They could play the role of giver, knowing that their later demands for a share in the goods of others would be met.

Bragdon also critiques the stereotype of sexual egalitarianism. While much has been made of matriarchal societies among

the Iroquois and other Native American groups, adding to the common perception of gender equality among Native Americans in general, Bragdon denies that such equality existed among the Ninnimissinuok. While she calls for more attention to the important contributions Ninnimissinuok women made through their agricultural labors and weaving, she acknowledges that their work did not increase their status among their own people and that, in fact, the clear status differences and hierarchical political structure of coastal societies may have rested on men's increasing control over the labor of women. Bragdon cautions that mistaken attribution of a "primordial egalitarian quality" to male-female relations in southern New England "masks the internal inequalities" that greatly impacted women (p. 181).

While Bragdon does an impressive job dispelling these and other concepts that have been used to construct a generic version of the Native American, she does not fully examine some aspects of the stereotype. For instance, Bragdon claims that the Ninnimissinuok had a cyclical view of time. She limits her support for this idea to the claim that their rituals marked "various stages of passage from death to regeneration" (p. 221). Such an explanation of the cyclical view of time is general enough to fit most cultures, Native or European. Bragdon also writes that adolescent boys participated in vision quests as part of their transition to manhood but gives no supporting evidence. Because both concepts have become standard fare in general accounts of Native Americans, they need specific explanation and documentation.

Bragdon's careful deconstruction of familiar themes and use of fascinating linguistic and archeological evidence to elucidate less familiar subjects creates a detailed, whole picture of the Ninnimissinuok. Future researchers can benefit from her approach: By pointing out the complexity behind many concepts long familiar to us, Bragdon opens the door for more nuanced studies of specific topics in the future. The high quality of the book's content is well matched by an attractive presentation. The photographs are clear and interesting, and the drawings of Native artifacts are skillfully done and well placed. Unfortunately, the book has a number of technical flaws that could have been avoided through more careful proofreading, including incomplete or absent referencing of some works cited in text and, most noticeably, inadequate or absent map legends. These mistakes will undoubtedly be corrected in future editions

of what will certainly be a standard on the Native peoples of southern New England for many years to come.

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**Nez Perce Women in Transition, 1877-1990.** By Caroline James. Moscow, ID: University of Idaho Press, 1996. 245 pages. \$49.95 cloth.

Evolving out of a 1990 photographic exhibit of the same name, *Nez Perce Women in Transition, 1877-1990* is an impressive compilation of photographs, historical and anthropological records, biographical narratives, and original interview material documenting the lives and dramatically changing circumstances of the women of the Nez Perce Nation. As such, this work is invaluable as a reference book and as a comprehensive source for information about all aspects of Nez Perce life. Subject areas include traditional and contemporary subsistence and domestic tasks, including women's arts such as painting and basketry; women's changing political roles; family and kinship structures; religion and education, both traditional and transitional; the impacts on Nez Perce women of important historical events like the acquisition of horses and the encroachments of outsiders, as well as the participation of women in these events; and issues faced by Nez Perce women in the modern world.

Much of the information in this book has been gleaned from older and often obscure works that tended to focus on Nez Perce men, but contained enough references to the women to give some hint of their daily round. The author has done a good job of extracting these bits of information and presenting them here in a coherent fashion. As a reader and researcher of Plateau ethnography myself, I appreciate how few and far between significant references to women can be in a body of material that is itself rather sparse. The Nez Perce are probably the best-known of the native societies in this region, but the Plateau area remains unknown and underappreciated by much of the world.

The author's discussion of the roles and experiences of women during the 1877 Nez Perce War is especially valuable because it is rare—to outsiders, that is. Nez Perce women themselves are acutely aware that two-thirds of the 700-plus people who made the 1,100-mile journey were women and children,